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ABSTRACT

Analyzing the changing needs of young people today can be helpful in designing future nutrition education programs. Studies indicate that 40 percent of today's 18-26 year olds have considerably different values/attitudes from past values/attitudes. Technology may determine what is possible, but values and attitudes determine what people will accept. The influence of three major value-teaching institutions, the family, church, and school, has been changing in recent years. Changing family influences include the impact of preschool education, increased numbers of young people leaving home to attend college, and the increased number of working mothers. Decline of the influence of institutionalized religion is reflected in 1971 Gallup surveys of decreased church attendance. Two important changing school influences are the analytical teaching approaches and a new breed of teachers representing a broader spectrum of society than previous groups of middle class teachers. Among numerous other influences are television, the trend toward life simplification, and the growth of consumerism. A relevant, challenging nutrition education curriculum is needed from preschool to adulthood, with greatest emphasis at the elementary level. Professionals must serve as catalysts to make nutrition education basic to school curriculum design and an integral part of teacher training. (EA)

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[Speculations on Nutrition Education for the Next Generation]

Speech Delivered at

Society for Nutrition Education Annual Meeting

Atlanta, Georgia Aug. 5-8, 1973

by

Dr. Donald C. McAfee

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
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Bob Ullrich asked me to speak on Nutrition Education for the Next Generation. However, upon reflection, perhaps this talk should be retitled Speculations on Nutrition Education for the Next Generation. I'd like to examine some of the contemporary problems of America, and their meaning to us as nutrition educators. Thus I would like to turn to Dr. Philip White for a quotation and supporting statistics: Phil has gone on record as stating that by the time the average American is 70, he will have consumed the equivalent of 150 head of cattle, 2,400 chickens and 26 acres of grain. This will also include 225 lambs, 310 hogs, and 50 acres of fruits and vegetables. To wash down this huge grocery list we will use 7,000 gallons of water. Now while these data may cause some of you wonder and others gastronomical and mental distress, Phil does give us further optimistic encouragement in that we will of course balance our consumption of these food groups with 510 gallons of gin and 1½ quarts of vermouth, for those of you who are martini drinkers.

There is no doubt in my mind after reviewing our history, and modern day prognostications, that there will be a huge job for nutrition educators. However, in order to gain the perspectives necessary for the design of future nutrition education programs for the next generation it would be wise of us to carefully attempt to analyze what's happening with young people today. The young of today and their changing needs can help us to understand the changes that will be required in the future, and rest

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assured change is in the air, change so different and vast that... In the highly controversial best seller, The Greening of America, Charles Reich forecasted: "There is a revolution coming...It promises a higher reason, a more humane community, and a new and liberated individual...this is the revolution of the new generation...It is both necessary and inevitable and in time it will include not only youth but all people in America."

I would like to quote from Direction 1980 Changing Life Styles, produced by Management Horizons, Inc. -- Between 1970 and 1980 the population of the United States is predicted to increase from about 204 million to 230 million - a gain of roughly 26 million. The major growth market will be the 20-34 year-old group; (there will be nearly 14.5 million more people in this latter age category in 1980 than there were in 1970). In 1970, these individuals earned 20.5 percent of all before-tax income; but by 1980 they will receive 26.0 percent of all before-tax income. The 20-34 year-old market - particularly the 25-34 year-old segment - will be the major consumers of nutrition information tomorrow, both in terms of increasing numbers of people, as well as purchasing power.

Who are these people that will make up the important market of the future? Some of them are black, some white. Many are Protestant, more are Catholic. Some live in the East, others in the West. But despite their diversity, they all have one thing in common: all are under 26 years of age today. In other words, the 18-26 year-old market of today will become the great market opportunity of tomorrow.

Numerous studies indicate that about 40 percent of these people have values and attitudes considerably different from the values and attitudes

of the past. In order to adapt to and capitalize on these new educational opportunities, it is important to understand why these changes are occurring.

It does not take a professional psychologist or sociologist to realize that things are changing. The question is not whether things are different; it's why they are different. Moreover, it is not a question of whether these new values and attitudes and life styles are "right" or "wrong" - or whether we "like" them or "dislike" them. The major point to remember is from the viewpoint of youth, their views are entirely right in their judgment.

Sociologists and anthropologists tell us that any culture, including the American culture is comprised of technology on the one hand and values on the other. Technology determines what is possible to do. Values and attitudes determine what people will accept.

If I were to make one prediction about the direction of nutrition education in the future - it would be that values determination will outweigh all other factors in describing successful programs.

No individual was ever born with a set of values or ideas about what is right and wrong, good and bad, or desirable and undesirable. Moreover, no one will ever be born with a set of values. Rather, values are learned as the result of interactions with certain institutions - primarily the family, church, and school - and certain lifetime experiences. The reason why 40 percent of the youth of today, who will become the major educational challenge of tomorrow, are different is because they have experienced different institutional influences and lifetime experiences.

Let us examine these changes in experiences:

Changing Institutional Influences -- Institutions exert an important influence on values. Through interaction with family members, the church, and the school, an individual learns what is appropriate and inappropriate.

Let's look at each of these separately:

Changing Family Influences -- During the last 30 years the structural and behavioral characteristics of families have changed in ways that tend to reduce the influence of the family on an individual's values and attitudes. For example, it used to be that children began school at the age of 5 or 6. In recen times this has changed. More and more children attend pre-schools at ages 2 to 4. In 1965, about 27 percent of all 3 to 5 year-olds were enrolled in pre-schools; by 1970 the figure had reached 37 percent. Thus, to an increasing extent, children are out of the home at an earlier age and are exposed to a larger number of people who commonly represent different social classes. This is important because behavioral scientists maintain that about 80 percent of a child's personality is formed before the age of 6.

It used to be that when children grew up they lived in the same community in which they were raised and they continued to be exposed to their fathers and mothers, grandmothers and grandfathers, aunts and uncles, and other authoritative figures. This historic pattern has also changed. For example, in 1940 only about 15 percent of 18-21 year-olds were enrolled in college. By 1960 that figure had reached 35 percent, and by 1970 nearly 43 percent. A substantial proportion of these people attended college away from home and accepted employment in different geographical areas. It is very difficult to communicate values and attitudes through the mail or by long-distance telephone.

I'd like to quote from the article, Eating Revolution, in the publication Food & Fitness by James L. Breeling, who wrote: "The typical American mother today doesn't know what her family is eating. As far as eating is concerned she doesn't manage the household, she just re-stocks supplies and fixes the meals that account for only one-third to one-half of her family's daily food intake."

Mr. Breeling continues: "The pattern of snacking, mini-meals, use of pre-prepared and convenience foods and eating away from home is one that seems likely to persist into the foreseeable future." What does this mean to you as a nutrition educator?

McDonald's, the hamburger people, have enjoyed overwhelming success partially because of their ability to attract young people. Unlike eating-out decisions of the past, over 80 percent of the decisions to stop at McDonald's are made by 2-11 year-olds.

In 1946, about 20 percent of all wives were employed outside their households, but by 1970 that figure had risen to 41 percent. The majority of these women work full-time, and a large percentage of them have children - most commonly between the ages of 5 and 17. Does the "early-morning/late-nighttime-mother" communicate values and attitudes as well as her predecessors? The family is not as influential in instilling values in its children as it used to be. This is one reason why a substantial percentage of youth believe in different things than society as a whole does.

What changes have the jet revolution brought about for today's businessmen? ...Allow an example to illustrate my point. A few weeks ago I was asked to deliver a keynote address to a group of teachers taking a Nutrition

Education Workshop. I had breakfast at home, flew to Denver gave my talk and then flew back in time for dinner at home.

Institutional Religion -- Historically, the church has exerted an important influence on the values, attitudes, and life styles of America. The church has had much to say about what people should and should not do, and what they should and should not believe in. Undoubtedly, the influence of institutionalized religion has declined. However, the decline is not so apparent when church membership statistics are examined. The American Council of Churches estimates that the percentage of the population that are members of churches rose from 49 percent in 1940 to 64 percent in 1960, and then leveled off during the remainder of the decade. Currently membership is estimated to be 63 percent of the population. But, of course, church membership is one thing and church attendance is quite another. Using a national sample, George Gallup measures church attendance during a typical week, and in 1942 about 49 percent of all adults attended, while in 1971 only 40 percent were regular attendees. Gallup surveys also ask the question: "Is religion losing its influence on American Life?" In 1957, only 14 percent said "yes." By 1968, the figure had reached 70 percent, and in 1971, 75 percent felt that religion was becoming less influential.

The declining influence and growing uncertainty about religion has also affected the ministry. Another recent Gallup survey asked a sample of clergy: "Have you ever seriously considered leaving the religious life." Of those clergymen 40 years of age and under, 33 percent of Protestant ministers, 37 percent of Catholic priests, and 58 percent of rabbis said that they had seriously considered leaving.

Schools -- The third major institution that teaches values - and schools, like most other institutions, have changed in recent times. The two most important changes, for our purposes, are: (1) the new breed of teachers, and (2) the emergence and proliferation of different teaching techniques. Prior to the Second World War, most teachers came from the middle classes. Wealthy parents send their children to college, but usually not to be teachers. Poor parents typically did not have the opportunity to send their children to college at all. Most teachers came from the middle classes and tended to teach and reinforce what have now come to be called "middle class values." The G.I. Bill of Rights; government sponsored loans; increasing incidence of working wives made it possible for a much larger number of young people to attend college. These youngsters represented a much broader spectrum of society than had been the case previously. The most common occupational choice of students during this period of time was teaching. Thus, beginning in the 1950's and accelerating during the 1960's, teachers represented a much different social background. The new breed of the teachers could not help but influence their perspective on life and the types of values and attitudes that they communicate in the classroom. Consider, in the classrooms today we have teachers who were college students present at the Kent State massacre, and those who were participating in the free speech movement on the Berkeley campus, have those experiences affected their values?

A recent survey done by the Gallup Poll indicates that 51 percent of college students had tried marijuana in the last thirty days and those who use it average ten times a month.

Many of you will remember when educating was teaching and testing. More recently the trend has been toward analytical approaches to teaching, as is evidenced by the new math and counterpart techniques in other disciplines. This teaching pedagogy encourages students to think through problems for themselves, to not accept anything that they can't work out themselves, and to not accept things just because they always have been that way. This approach to teaching encourages analysis and thought, and also fosters the kinds of questioning attitudes that the youth of today have about life, about the world in which they live, and about business institutions that are such an important part of it. The changing influence of schools, then, is the third major reason why life styles are changing.

The perspectives of the post-war generation have proliferated partly because of the communications revolution. In 1953, about 47 percent of all homes had television sets. By 1960, penetration had reached 90 percent, and currently the figure stands at nearly 99 percent. There are more homes with television sets than with indoor plumbing facilities.

What do these figures mean? Take a person who is currently 17 years of age. In 1960, he or she was 5 years old. So, roughly speaking, these figures indicate that about nine out of every ten 17 year-olds have had television sets since they were 5 years of age. It is estimated that the average high school graduate has attended school 11,000 hours and has watched television 16,000 hours.

Now there are many other examples of changing life styles and values in America that I could discuss such as:

Increase Instant Gratification

Growth Credit Explosion

There is a New Theology of Pleasure

The New Work Ethic is Dissipating the Puritan Ethic

Life Simplification

One of the most powerful developments is the trend toward life simplification. People are interested in products and services that take the work out of life, that allow them to do things quicker and easier.

Examples:

- In 1960, less than 7 percent of automobiles came equipped with air conditioning; by 1970, nearly 61 percent had it installed at the factory.
- The percentage of homes having blenders increased from 7.5 in 1960 to 31.7 in 1970.
- The percentage of homes having automatic coffeemakers increased from 53.4 in 1960 to 86.4 in 1970.
- The percentage of homes having dishwashers increased from 6.3 in 1960 to 23.7 in 1970.
- The percentage of homes having food disposers increased from 9.5 in 1960 to 22.9 in 1970.

Many housewives like to bake as simply as possible: "Introducing Betty Crocker Bake and Snack - you mix, bake and serve it right in the same pan." Campbell's tells consumers to use their vegetable soup: "How to serve 16 vegetables in five minutes without paring, peeling, shelling, or defrosting."

Changing Perspectives in the Morality Revolution

Love, sex, relating to others and one's self.

Changing Femininity for Women's Lib

A Society that Stresses Youth Orientation

Increased Concern About Appearance and Health

Introspection

Which is the re-examination of the meaning of life, being

Desire for Novelty, Change and Escape

Movement Toward Naturalism

Increasing numbers of consumers are rejecting artificial forms of behavior and appear[illegible]avor of naturalism; if you want it to sell make it [illegible]esh, natural.

Desire for Personal Creativity

Fear is a Byword of the Day

Institutional Reliance (Especially in Area of Health Care)

Ironic Loss of Confidence in Institutions to Solve Problems of Society

Growth of Consumerism

The consumerism movement is one of the most controversial and frequently talked about developments in the business sector today. A recent article in the Harvard Business Review pointed out: (1) consumerism was inevitable; (2) it will be enduring; (3) it will be beneficial; (4) it is pro-marketing; and (5) it can be profitable.

What does this forecast of tomorrow's society mean to nutrition education today?

I view this as a need for us to restructure, modify and change our approach to working within the educational paradigm. Yet, while gearing up for change we must look to the things that we are doing that are right, and verify or validate them with much better nutrition education

research. While recognizing the needs for stronger, more definitive research efforts, I would like to suggest that in looking toward NUTRITION EDUCATION FOR THE NEXT GENERATION we will want to concentrate our efforts in the following area:

Development of much better curriculum to extend from pre-school to 12th grade (not to exclude college and adult educational opportunities). This must begin with the greatest emphasis on the elementary school level:

A. Children are pliable

B. Behaviors, habits of a lifetime start early

C. Children will listen to, believe in educational process

We, as nutrition educators, have a challenge to help make the curriculum in nutrition education as meaningful and relevant to educators and children as the three R's. This will have to be a curriculum that no longer stresses "memorization and regurgitation" and acquisition of knowledge. The function of education is changing from "life for learning" to "life for being."

Curriculum that does not challenge students to define the values in their behavior, allowing for alternative decision making, will not equip them for the challenges of the future.

We as educators will have to recognize and cope with the delicate, yet strong, obvious, yet difficult to detect interrelationships between knowledge, - attitudes - and behavior. We will have to recognize that it is not enough that children can identify foods within the four food groups, but how they relate this knowledge to their own lives and personal habits.

Thus, we must continuously ask ourselves, "What is it that we expect of the student after they have had this educational experience?" We will have to critically design educational programming that will key upon desired student behavior.

Teachers, administrators and curriculum supervisors are seeking curriculum that is specific about its objectives. "Accountability" is more than just a passing phrase in educationland. Behavioral objectives with appropriate learning experiences, reinforced by sound resources and careful evaluation of student achievement are the hallmark by which educational programs are being judged today.

Teachers are too busy, and have too many subjects competing for classroom time to allow them to work with educational schemes that are vague and nonproductive in preparing children for the challenges of tomorrow. There is a great demand and opportunity for learning packages or modules that can be readily incorporated into modern educational methodology and philosophy.

And the curriculum must spiral, or be planned for sequence, reinforcement, and more sophisticated concepts. While it is an excellent educational concept for us to utilize the four food groups with primary children, we cannot continue to chant the refrain to more sophisticated elementary, junior high and senior high students.

At the upper grade levels both students and teachers are seeking educational programs that will allow for debate, discovery, and self-hypothesis. Nutrition education approaches will have to stress controlled trial and error, allowing students the opportunity to examine own behavior and the factors

behind that behavior to "see how it fits." Many traditional values and concepts in nutrition will be challenged, and indeed some will have to change. We will need to be bold, innovative and occasionally experimental.

Dairy Council is pioneering in new media ideas and has experimentally developed a trigger film for use in nutrition education. I'd like to share it with you now (followed by brief explanation of how we plan to use and evaluate).

(Show Cathy.....)

Not only do we need to key out the needs for curriculum and educational methodology consistent with our perspectives on tomorrow's generation, but we must examine the changes in teachers and the teaching profession. Yesterday's nutrition education suffered from many failings because there was little room in the curriculum: frequently it wasn't taught at all: or the teacher had no training and therefore simply passed on misconceptions about nutrition that she had acquired from a lifetime acquisition of ignorance. However, today we find teachers who are willing and eager to learn about nutrition and how to teach it. Schools are giving time to nutrition that previously only gave it lip service. In the states of Illinois and New York health education is mandated for all students, with nutrition being one of the topics that must be taught. Other states such as California, Oregon, Washington and Wisconsin are seeking similar patterns either through legislative action, or with hard sell for school administrators. The hard work of the Society for Nutrition Education, the American School Food Service, Dairy Councils, local nutrition councils, government agencies and individuals such as yourself is beginning to pay off. Nutrition education is an idea whose time has come.

I would like to suggest the followirg plan of action for nutrition educators:

A. We as professionals in this field must work as catalysts urging colleges to make nutrition education an integral part of the teacher training program.

B. We must continue to agitate and advocate for nutrition training for elementary teachers, and all specialists in the home economics and health education fields at the junior and senior high levels. Certification agencies in teaching should be pressured, to assure competency in the area of nutrition education.

C. We will have to work with school boards and administrators to assure that nutrition education is basic to all school curriculum designs.

D. We will have to look closely at curriculum patterns and teaching methods to examine how well they are planned and working. We must constantly hold aloft our motto, "nutrition education can be fascinating and exciting," it doesn't have to turn kids off.

In conclusion:

You have heard other speakers discuss critical issues in nutrition... Because of your own experiences and training you are aware that public interest in nutrition has never been higher...

Consumers today, and certainly in the future, are and will be confronted with wider food choices. There is a need to choose better, and to buy more carefully. These are critical decisions, and alternatives will have to be weighed against the costs, or benefits in terms of economics and health, both of which are value choices.

Today's educators want to be more responsive, their students and the challenges of lifetime survival demand it. They want to do a professionally creditable job. It is up to us to supply the motivation, tools and know-how.

In closing I would like to leave you with the following thought.

It's always difficult to keep in mind that your job is to drain the swamp, especially when you're up to your eyebrows in alligators.

Thank you.